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ABSTRACT

Organizational patterns can be examined from two major perspectives. The formal structure of an organization consists of those relationships among the organizational components that are the result of deliberate planning. This formal structure tends to be static and is the primary focus of management theory. The informal structure of an organization is determined by the unplanned relationships that develop to carry out the organization's internal processes. This informal structure is dynamic and adaptive and is the central concern of human relations theory. The operations of an organization cannot be fully understood without both formal and informal structures being considered simultaneously. (PGD)

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INCREASING PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

TREATISE NO. 1

"UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS"

NEW MEXICO RESEARCH AND STUDY COUNCIL
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The New Mexico Research and Study Council adopted its Constitution on January 14, 1959, with sixteen public school districts, the State Department of Education, and the University of New Mexico becoming charter members. Today, the Council is fifty-six members strong, and is celebrating, during this 1983-84 school year, twenty-five years of educational service to New Mexico's youth.

The Council is an organization designed specifically to facilitate co-operative study and solution of educational concerns. Through the combined resources, assistance, and direction of members, the Council strives to improve and expand elementary and secondary education in New Mexico.

This publication represents the Council's first effort at celebrating this auspicious occasion, the Silver Anniversary Year of the New Mexico Research and Study Council.

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June 1, 1983

PREFACE

Six edifying and thoughtful expositive papers are being distributed to the educational administrators of New Mexico as one of several special Twenty-fifth Anniversary efforts of the New Mexico Research and Study Council. The personal and organizational topics and their approximate 1983 publication dates are as follows:

1. Understanding Organizational Patterns (April 15)
2. Characteristics of Effective Organizations (May 1)
3. Understanding Sources of Organizational Conflict And Conflict Management Strategies (May 15)
4. Time Management Techniques (June 1)
5. Maintaining Successful Communications (June 15)
6. Promoting The Organization (July 1)

We owe thanks to the American Association of School Administrators and its National Academy For School Executives for providing the impetus which led us to the development of this series of abstracts. The Council had initially hoped to participate in the Academy's July 1983 Colorado Springs seminar titled "Increasing Personal And Organizational Effectiveness", but when legislated school budget reductions made such an educational experience an impossibility for 1983, we utilized the Academy's seminar description as the basis for preparing these treatises.

The papers were initially researched and drafted by Bea Davis, a Council graduate assistant, as her primary assistantship assignment during the spring

semester of 1983. Bea and I "polished" the papers, and release them as Council publications envisioning that practicing school administrators will utilize them as useful self-education and staff-education conveyances.

Superintendents, after reading each treatise, are encouraged to have the six compendia placed in a three-ring binder or other easy-to-use professional library reference folder and to share the publications with subordinates and other key faculty and staff members.

Preparing papers for colleagues to read (and critique) is a weighty task. I appreciate the effort put forth by Bea Davis in encapsulating in a relatively brief set of papers an extensive, multifarious and utilitarian array of views, concepts, and principles applicable to the everyday thoughts and endeavors of both administrative theorists and practitioners.

Dr. Richard F. Tonigan

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The established pattern of relationships among the various components of an organization constitutes the structure of that organization. While this structure cannot be seen in the same way a biological or mechanical structure can be seen, it can nonetheless be inferred from observation of the actual operations and behaviors that exist. Because the organizational patterns in a social system are not obvious, very diffuse, and highly complex, they are hard to analyze and to understand. The newness of social theory development as a science also contributes to these difficulties.

To distinguish between organizational structure and organizational process can provide a useful tool in the development of deeper understanding. Unlike biological systems where the structure of an organism is physical and can be studied separately from its processes, social systems perhaps are more problematic. Clear-cut distinctions between structure and process are seemingly more difficult. While the structure of an organization and its processes cannot be completely separated, they can, nonetheless, be seen as two separate theoretical phenomena. They represent the static and the dynamic features of an organization.

To understand a particular organization and its operations, it could be most helpful to investigate its static formal structural dimensions. In a different organization it could be more meaningful to examine the dynamic informal processes, which include a workflow process, an authority process, a reward and penalty process, a perpetuation process, an identification

process, a communication process and an evaluation process, according to Bakke and Argyris (Organizational Structure and Dynamics, pp. 10-11). There are other organizations that can best be understood only through careful review of both the structural and the dynamic components.

FORMAL STRUCTURE

While examining the initial formal design of the major components of an organization one must also investigate the patterns established in relationships among these components. These patterns of relationships within the organization are considered part of the formal structure. This formal structure is defined in terms of five attributes (according to Bakke and Argyris), which include:

1. The pattern of formal relationships and responsibilities as displayed on organizational charts or in job descriptions.
2. The pattern of assignments to different departments or to various activities.
3. The pattern of coordination for these activities and tasks.
4. The hierarchical relationships within the organization.
5. The formal policies, procedures, and regulations that control the activities and the relationships of people in the organization.

These five attributes represent the planned structure of an organization, with deliberate management attempts to establish patterned relationships among

its various components. This formal structure is usually the result of explicit decision-making and is prescriptive in nature. These organizational patterns set a general framework for operation, delineating certain prescribed functions, responsibilities, and relationships.

INFORMAL STRUCTURE

The behavior within an organization that is not formally defined in the above manner is viewed as part of the informal structure. Informal behavior includes those relationships and patterns of interaction that emerge as adaptive responses to the formal organization. The informal organization, then, refers to those components of the system that are not explicitly planned. They often develop as spontaneous outgrowths of the formal activities from within the organization. They might also develop as a result of deliberate management efforts to produce an environment, or organizational climate, that encourages these developments. While components of the informal system are not explicitly planned, a climate for their growth can be.

According to Argyris in Diagnosing Human Relations in Organizations (1956),

> ".....informal activity is any adaptive activity manifested by the participants of the organization. There are two kinds of informal activity. The first is activity that has its basis in, and satisfies the expectancies of the group. The behavioral sequences assigned to individuals (informally by the group) are called informal tasks. The second type of activity has as its basis the individual's attempt to express his personality. It is idiosyncratic, unique for a given individual, and is called act behavior".

Many interactions occur within an organization that are not prescribed by the formal structure, but are nevertheless vital for the effective functioning of the system. Often these interactions spontaneously develop in response

to needs that are unmet within the formal structure. For example, when the formal organization responds slowly to situations that require quicker action, informal relationships develop to activate results. In this manner, the informal patterns can be more adaptive, performing more innovative functions that are inadequately addressed by the formal structure.

TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RELATIONS THEORIES

Traditional management theorists have heavily concentrated on analyzing and understanding the organizational patterns of formal structures. Their primary concern has been with the design of efficient organizations, emphasizing such concepts as objectivity, impersonality, and structural form. Rigid structures with well-defined relationships and clearly established lines of authority and communication typify these organizations. Concern for allocation and coordination of activities primarily determines the design of the organizational structure, with positions, rather than people, being delegated the authority and responsibility for accomplishing given tasks.

In contrast to the views of the traditional management theorists are the views of the human relations theorists, who concentrate on informal organizational structures. They are primarily concerned with interpersonal relationships within an organization, believing that individuals should be the fundamental units of analysis in organization theory. Human relations theorists concentrate on the informal structures of an organization, emphasizing that individuals within an organization often have goals that differ from those of the formal system. The self-interests of an employee cannot be totally identical to the interests and goals of an organization. This diversity of focus between traditionalists and human relations theorists has led to the view that

there is an actual separation between the formal and informal structures of an organization.

In understanding organizational patterns, however, it is important to note that the separation between formal and informal structures is theoretical. In reality it would be impossible to understand the nature of a formal organization without understanding the networks of informal relations, the unofficial norms, and the personal interactions that also exist. The formal hierarchy of authority and the official policies and procedures are inextricably intertwined with the informal patterns. While the distinction between formal and informal aspects of an organization can be analytically helpful, one must remember that these coexist within one organization. Understanding organizational patterns, then, entails an appreciation for this dependent relationship between the formal and informal structures both in theory and in practice.